

Lucretia Cox House
328 Green Street
Staunton
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1200

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LUCRETIA COX HOUSE

HABS No. VA-1200

Location:

The Lucretia Cox House is located at 328 Green Street on the corner lot northwest of the intersection of Green and Stuart Streets in the City of Staunton, Virginia. The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, running east and west, is parallel to Stuart Street to the south of the house.

Present Owner:

Mrs. Eleanor D. Patrick, Braeburn, Staunton, Virginia.

Present Occupant:

Russel and Virginia Stankus.

Present Use:

Rental House.

Significance:

Built in 1865, the Lucretia Cox House is a small, one-and-a-half story frame dwelling with a side hall plan raised over a stone cellar. The exterior is ornamented with Carpenter Gothic details including the scalloped bargeboard and a handcarved sunburst motif in the gable end of the porch on the east facade.

I PHYSICAL HISTORY

Date of Erection: 1866

Architect: Unknown

Chain of Title: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the property on which the Lucretia Cox House was built. All deeds are found in the Augusta County Courthouse and the Staunton City Hall and are referred to as either A.D.B. or S.D.B.

1866 December 7 A.D.B 83 pp. 2-3
John B. and Mildred M. Engleman
to
Lucretia Cox

1876 July 2 S.D.B 7 p. 283
Samuel C. and Annie Cox
to
B. F. Cox, trustee for Virginia
Cox and her children
(a lot on Railroad Street containing
a small tenement)

1880 February 12 S.D.B 8 p. 163
Between Samuel C. Cox and Annie M. Cox
"...joint owners of a lot with 2
dwelling houses and want to make a
partition..."

1935 October 11 Staunton Will Book 8 p. 305
Codicil No. 3 Will of S. C. Cox
S. C. Cox bequeaths "...his old home
place on the corner of Green and
Stuart Street to his nephew, Howard
Gregory, with the understanding he
is leaving it in trust... and at
his death the property shall go to
his sister's two children, Samuel
Liggon Crigger and Theresa Crigger.."

1940 March 19 Staunton Chancery Order Book 9 p. 455
Devisees of S. C. Cox vs. Devisees of
S. C. Cox (File 309)
Third Decree p. 2
"...The Court doth further adjudge,
order and decree that Codicil No. 3
to the will of Samuel C. Cox is in
full force and effect...."

Original and Subsequent Owners: The following is an explanation of the transactions occurring in the preceding chain of title.

The Lucretia Cox House was built in 1866 on land given to Lucretia Cox by John B. and Mildred Engleman. Lucretia Cox died without making a will and the property was conveyed to her children Samuel C. and Annie Cox in 1876. For the sum of \$5.00, paid by Virginia Cox, their stepmother, a lot and small tenement house on Railroad Street was conveyed to B. F. Cox, trustee for Virginia Cox and her children which was free from the debts, claims and liabilities of her husband, B. F. Cox. The Staunton Landbooks, between 1873 and 1875, indicate that improvements were added on the property which increased the value of the buildings from \$400.00 to \$1500.00. These improvements probably refer to the tenement house provided for Virginia Cox (now 805 W. Stuart), the house built by Annie Cox (now 324 Green Street) and the small wing and porch added to the northwest corner of the Lucretia Cox House. In 1877, the value of the buildings depreciated to \$1400.00 with a specific reference to "a lot and house for Virginia Cox."

In 1880, Samuel C. Cox and Annie Cox decided to make a partition between their two houses. Samuel retained the southern portion of the lot and Annie received the northern portion. Since Samuel's property was considered more valuable than Annie's, Samuel was bound:

...first, to paint the house taken by said Annie M. Cox, on the outside with one full coat of paint. 2nd - to erect the partition fence between himself and the said Annie M.... before the 15th day of April next. 3rd - The said Samuel binds himself to pay to the said Annie the sum of seventy-five dollars to be paid in one year from the date of this deed... to secure the performance of said work and the payment of said seventy-five dollars, the said Annie is to retain a lien upon the whole of said portion of said property taken by said Samuel C. Cox... (S.D.B. 8 p. 163)

The property remained in Samuel Cox's possession until his death in December, 1935. His will was contested in a chancery case, Devisees of Samuel C. Cox vs. Devisees of Samuel C. Cox, due to the second codicil dated January 22, 1935 in which he left a trunk and its contents to his half-sister, Mrs. Eva Bishop. Among the contents of the trunk was a third codicil leaving his "old home place situated on the corner of Green and Stuart to his nephew, Howard Gregory, with the understanding he is leaving it in trust to him... and at his death the property shall go to his sister's two children Samuel Liggon Crigger, also Theresa Crigger..." (Staunton Will Book 8 p. 305). Under the third decree of the chancery case, recorded March 19, 1940, the second and third codicils of Samuel Cox's wills were declared to be valid.

In 1975, Samuel Liggon and Marjorie J. Crigger with Theresa C. and Greer Y. Osborne conveyed the property to Mrs. Eleanor D. Patrick with General Warranty of Title.

Alterations and Additions: The only additions to the house were a small wing extending off of the northwest room and a small porch with jigsaw ornamentation which sheltered the door leading outside from the southwest room. Both of these additions were probably added by Samuel Cox during the 1870's. Since the sills of the wing rested on the ground, the sills and floor had deteriorated and Mrs. Eleanor Patrick, present owner of the house, decided to remove the addition when she began the restoration in 1977. The exposed wall when the wing was removed was insulated and the weatherboards were replaced, leaving a slight jog in the west wall of the structure.

Several other alterations were made during the 1977 restoration. When the leaky tin roof was removed, the original cedar shakes were discovered. Due to the expense and fire insurance, Mrs. Patrick decided to replace the roof with galvanized aluminum. The east porch floor and sills had deteriorated and had to be replaced. The original wooden supports at the corners of the porch were replaced with brick piers.

Interior alterations included the removal of a plaster and lathe partition running along the summer beam in the cellar, in order to create a larger and more functional room. The original wooden floors in the cellar had rotted leaving packed earth and Mrs. Patrick decided to replace them with a concrete floor. Extensive excavating was conducted in order to provide a drainage system running diagonally under the house to the storm sewer. During the excavations, underground cable television, electrical, and telephone wires were also installed. The plaster was stripped from the stone cellar walls and the walls were repointed with a concrete mixture.

As wallpaper was removed from the plaster walls on the first floor, stencilling was discovered including an elaborate medallion design on the ceiling of the southeast room. The plaster had to be removed due to its ^{poor} condition and was replaced with dry wall. As the woodwork was stripped, several layers of graining were discovered, the earliest being finely grained mahogany. The handcarved sunburst in the east porch gable was also cleaned and after the paint was removed, tiny chips of cadmium red and chrome yellow still clung to the wood, and Mrs. Patrick repainted it in these colors.

Alterations to the landscape included the addition of a fence running along the east boundary of the property. A small, curved brick wall was built along the steps on the south side of the structure in order to channel the water away from the house.

PERSONS CONNECTED WITH THE STRUCTURE

Little is known about the members of the Cox family who occupied the house with the exception of Samuel C. Cox who worked as a house painter. A reference to his profession is made in a deed dated 1880, when Samuel and his sister, Annie M. Cox, decided to make a partition between their houses (S.D.B. 8 p. 163). Samuel was required to paint the exterior of Annie's house.

During the 1977 restoration of the house, several remnants of his profession were found including old paint swatches and linseed oil and turpentine bottles. He may have been responsible for some of the wall stencilling discovered during the restoration and also the oak grained door panels which have survived in the southwest room.

II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural character: The Lucretia Cox House is a small, vernacular frame dwelling built in 1866. The exterior employs Carpenter Gothic details and of special interest is the handcarved sunburst motif in the gable of the east porch.

Condition of Fabric: Good.

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions: The one-and-one-half story house is raised over a stone cellar. The main house is square and measures 24' 2" on each side. A porch extends across the east front measuring 23' 0" by 6' 1".

Foundation: The coursed rubble walls are 1'6" thick. Above grade on the south exterior wall, the stone has been covered with a smooth concrete stucco. The interior stone walls have been repointed with a concrete mixture.

Wall Construction: The exterior walls are 5½" thick and are covered with weatherboards approximately 5½" wide. The exposed 2"X4" studs in the attic are mortised to the sill.

Structural system, Framing: Exterior walls are frame, load bearing. In the cellar, the 2X8 ceiling joists are spaced 2' on center. They are mortised into a 6X8 summer beam which runs from north to south along the center of the cellar ceiling. The summer beam is lap jointed approximately 10' from the south interior wall. The 2X4 attic joists are mortised to a 4X5 summer beam. The 2X4 roof rafters meet a ½X6 ridge board at the apex of the roof.

Porches: The east porch measures 6'1"X23' and has a floor of 5" wide tongue and groove boards supported by 2X12 joists. The corners are supported by 12" square brick posts with 4/16" joints. Four wooden Tuscan columns support the 3X5 wood fascia. The box cornice overhangs 8" and is adorned with a scalloped bargeboard. The ceiling of the porch is covered with 5½" tongue and groove boards. The tin roof is hipped and slopes approximately 10 degrees and is pierced in the center by a gable with a 40 degree pitch. The gable uses 3½" weatherboards and is adorned with a handcarved, semicircular sunburst surrounded by rays. The sunburst has a radius of approximately 1'-8". The porch is approached by a flight of 11 concrete stairs. Each step has a rise of 8" and a run of 12". The treads overhang 1½" and are decorated underneath by a cavetto curve. The concrete corner posts are 10" square with a 1½" overhang.

Chimney: An interior brick chimney rises from the roof ridge 2'-9". It serves the cellar fireplace and the southwest fireplace on the first floor. It also served a metal heating stove in the southeast room.

OPENINGS:

Doorways and Doors: The raised four-panel doors have simple architrave surrounds. The panels on the east first floor door are enriched with Jacobean moldings.

Windows: With the exception of the east cellar window, all of the cellar windows were replaced with 2 over 3 single sash casement windows which swing inward and have plain surrounds. The east cellar window and the first floor windows are all six over six, double hung, with architrave surrounds. The attic is lighted in the north and south gables with 2 over 2 windows with architrave trim. The first floor windows were once hung with louvred blinds measuring 4'6"x1'6". These are now stored under the east front steps.

ROOF:

Shape, Covering: The gable roof has a 30 degree slope and is covered with galvanized aluminum.

Cornice: The west cornice is plain and boxed and the east cornice is covered with tin flashing. The cornices on the north and south sides are decorated with a scalloped bargeboard.

DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

FLOOR PLANS:

Cellar Plan: The Cellar has one room measuring 20'9" square from the interior walls. The walls are of uncoursed stone, and the floors are concrete. An enclosed staircase leads to the first floor.

First Floor Plan: The first floor has a side hall and is two rooms deep. A handrail between two newel posts surrounds the stair well on two sides. A small room, now a bathroom, is located at the end of the hall, with two larger rooms leading off the left side of the hall.

Stairways: A single flight of stairs leads from the cellar to the first floor. It is completely enclosed in a closet of tongue and groove boards measuring 5½" wide. Each step rises 8" and runs 9".

Flooring: The original flooring on the first floor is comprised of random-width pine boards averaging between 5"-7". The cellar has a concrete floor, and the attic is unfloored.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: The original plaster and lath walls were insulated and replaced with dry wall, painted white.

Doorways and Doors: Typical doors are the raised 4 panel type. The closets in the stairhall and southwest rooms use 2 panel, double doors, and the closet and west door of the southwest room retain original oak graining. The door surrounds have architrave trim. The door enclosing the cellar stairs is a folding, board-and-batten type.

Windows: The windows retain much of their original glass. From the interior, it can be seen that the sashes are mortised and tenoned and the muntins are mortised through the rails. The surrounds have architrave trim.

Decorative Features: The cellar mantelpiece is framed by pilasters carrying a plain frieze pierced by a Tudor Arch. The shelf is plain. The mantel of the southwest room is similar except the pilasters and frieze are fluted. There is a simple, beaded baseboard used throughout the first floor. The hearth of the southwest fireplace has 4"X6" glazed tiles. In the first floor stair hall, two turned newel posts with a plain handrail and plain balusters enclose the stair well.

Hardware: The first floor doors still retain the original cast iron box locks and porcelain door knobs. The plate of the cast iron door knocker is still located on the east first floor door, and the windows retain the hardware for the blinds.

MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT:

Heating: The house is completely heated by the cellar and the southwest room fireplaces and a wood cooking stove in the cellar.

Lighting: Modern ceiling lighting fixtures are used throughout the house.

SITE: The house is located at the corner of Green and Stuart Streets directly north of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad line.

The house faces east-southeast, and the stone cellar is dug into the side of a small hill. The east wall of the cellar is completely above ground, but the terrain slopes upward on the north and south sides leaving only 5" to 12" of the wall exposed on the west side.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Interviews: All information concerning the 1977 restoration of the Lucretia Cox House and included with the Physical History under Alterations and Additions, page 4, was provided by the present owner, Mrs. Eleanor D. Patrick.

Primary and Unpublished Sources: Augusta County Deed Books, Augusta County Courthouse, Staunton, Virginia

Staunton Chancery Order Books, Deed Books and Land Books, Staunton City Hall, Clerk of Circuit Court Office, Staunton, Virginia

Gray's Map of Staunton, 1877 and Sandborn Insurance Maps of Staunton (October 1904 and November 1921), Historic Staunton Foundation, 218 East Frederick Street, Staunton, Virginia.

III PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia, under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Professor of Architecture, during the Fall Semester, 1982. The material was prepared by George W. Pohill, III, undergraduate in Architectural History. The documentation was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not prepared under HABS supervision, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.